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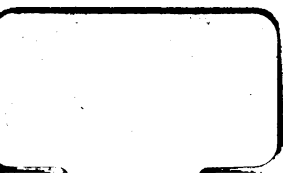
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**JOSHUA JAMES**

**LIFE-SAVER**

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# **JOSHUA JAMES**

## **LIFE-SAVER**

**BY**

**SUMNER I. KIMBALL**

**BOSTON**

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**1909**

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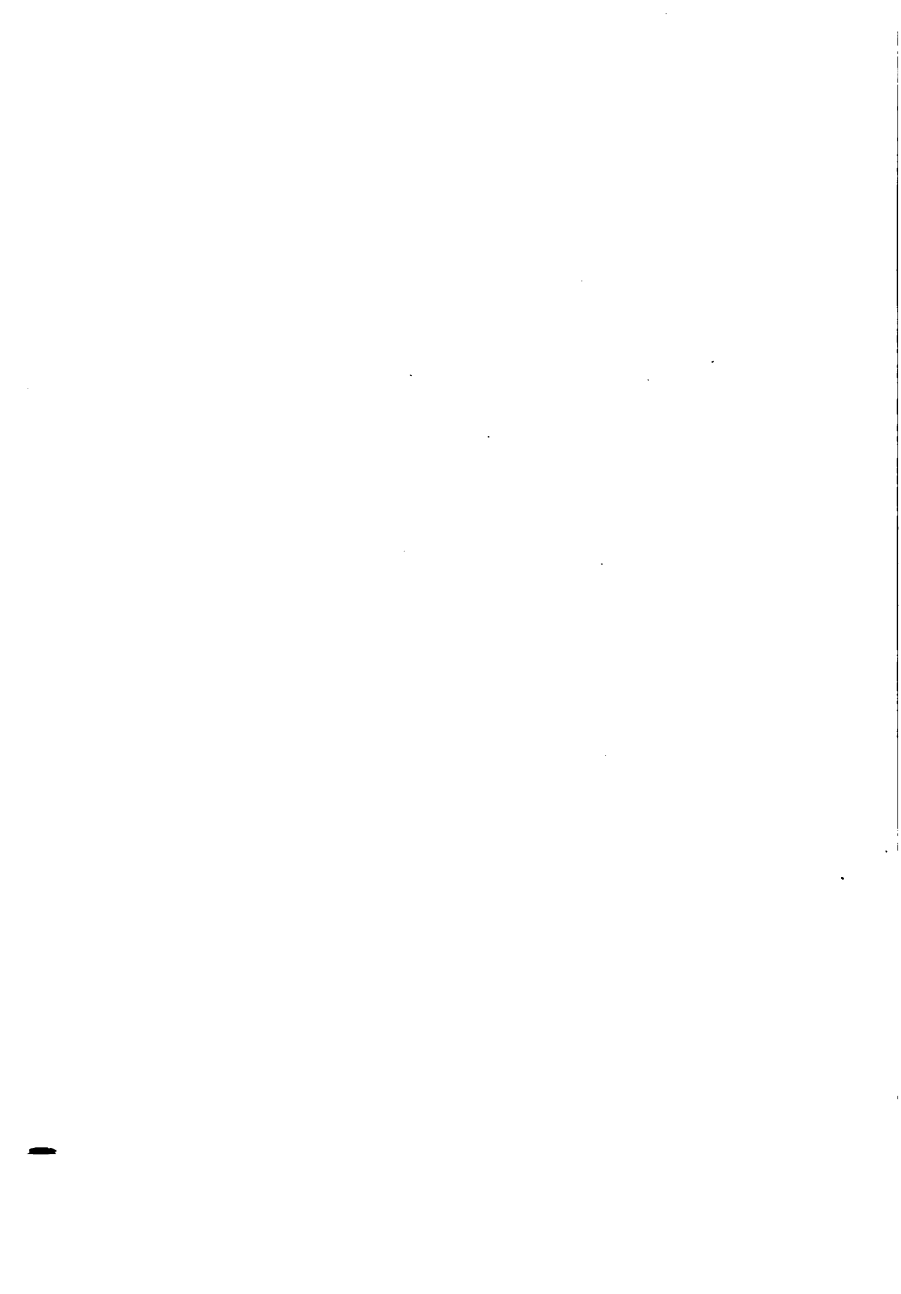
**A**

**L**



**" No wild hurrahs accompany  
The deeds these men do dare;  
No beat of drum, no martial strain,  
No spirit-stirring air.**

**" But in the cold and darksome night  
They combat with the blast;  
And gain, by dint of hardihood,  
The victory at last."**



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**N**O finer examples of sturdy American manhood can anywhere be found than in the crews of the United States Life-Saving Service. These little groups of from seven to ten men each, numbering in the aggregate a scant two thousand, are composed of robust, warm-hearted, and strong-handed residents of the coast, chosen for the most part from those who, through their previous occupations as fishermen, boatmen, and wreckers, have gained a thorough familiarity with the changeful moods of

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the sea, and especially with the peculiarities of the currents, reefs, bars, and surf in the region of their respective habitations. The qualifications thus attained, supplemented by their daily drill after enlistment in the Service, equip them in the best possible manner for their subsequent arduous and hazardous work. They are hardly known to the great majority of their countrymen living inland; but to the inhabitants of the coast, especially that large portion interested in our sea and lake commerce, and to those who follow the sea, they are well known indeed! To the latter, when the tropical hurricane or the chilling blast of the Arctic winter storm is driving their helpless craft into danger and possible destruction,

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or when impenetrable fog envelops them for days at a time, rendering chart and reckoning worthless, the assurance that a practically continuous line of keen-eyed and sleepless sentinels march and countermarch along the surf-beaten beaches or stand guard with warning signals in hand upon the jutting cliffs and headlands reaching far out into the sea for unwary victims, lends a comfortable sense of security. That this confidence is not misplaced is attested by the statistics of the Service, which show that of more than a hundred thousand lives imperiled upon vessels wrecked or in distress within the scope of the operations of the station crews since the systematic organization of the Service in 1871, less than one per cent has

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been lost, and that a considerable portion of even this small percentage is made up of those whom no human agency could save — as, persons washed overboard before or at the moment of stranding, sailors drowned in attempting to land in their own boats, or victims of sudden capsize of small boats who perished before help could possibly reach them. The record includes all, every life lost within the reasonable bounds of station activity, from craft of all kinds, the diminutive canoe as well as the mammoth ocean steamship.

Another American organization for the relief and succor of the shipwrecked is the Massachusetts Humane Society, which has made a most honorable record, and stands credited

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with the rescue of a multitude of lives. This Society is supported by voluntary contributions, their boats and appliances being operated by volunteers who are paid for each occasion of service. It was organized in 1785, and was among the first, if not the first, in the world to build huts for the comfort and shelter of shipwrecked persons and, subsequently (1807), to provide for rescue work with boats and other apparatus. Its operations are, of course, limited to the coast of Massachusetts, where it maintained at one time as many as 78 lifeboat and 13 mortar stations. When the national service extended its field to include that coast, in 1874, the Society discontinued some of its stations at points covered by the Gov-

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ernment work, and transferred others to points needing protection. It still maintains, however, several in proximity to Government stations in especially dangerous localities. At these places the crews of the two services have always harmoniously and effectively co-operated on occasions of shipwreck. The relations between the two organizations have also been of the most friendly and cordial nature.

In a series of sketches of "True American Types," one that represents the phase of our national character which the American life-saver, trained in one or both of these organizations, so aptly typifies, is peculiarly fitting, and the following is a narrative of the simple, unpretentious life of such a one. The subject of the sketch was



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connected with the Massachusetts Humane Society from his early youth until he was made keeper of a station in the United States Life-Saving Service, in which capacity he served during the last twelve years of his life.

Joshua James, on the paternal side, was of humble Dutch stock. William James, his father, was born in Dokkum, Holland, in the year 1782. Little is known of him before he became old enough to enter the army of his native country. He served for a while as a soldier until, tiring of the life, he ran away to sea, and in the course of time made his way to America, landing in Boston, where he soon after shipped on one of the numerous small schooners engaged in

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the business of furnishing paving stones to that city. This led him to make his home in Hull, where the vessel belonged. In due course, by dint of faithful service and a frugal life, he became the owner of a vessel and engaged in the paving-stone business for himself. In 1808 he married Esther Dill, daughter of Nathaniel and Esther (Stoddard) Dill, of Hull, both descended from the early English colonists. Her great-grandfather, Daniel Dill, served as a private in the Revolutionary Army, and during the War of 1812 members of her family acted as volunteer coast guards, and in that capacity rendered valuable service to the country. Esther, who was the only girl in a family of seven children, was but six-

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teen years of age at the time of her marriage. She was notably humanitarian and philanthropic in her nature, "smart" and capable of quickly adapting herself to circumstances. The crews of her husband's vessels found in her a veritable mother. She nursed them in sickness without thought of recompense, and constantly looked after their welfare. Nor did she confine her ministrations to these and their families only, but voluntarily sought out and liberally supplied the needs of the poor about her. Her remarkable courage and prompt decision are attested by an incident of her early married life. One of her children, then a year and a half old, fell into an old well some thirty to forty feet deep, containing about three

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feet of water. A descent into the well on the slippery stones was a perilous undertaking, and, other than herself, none of those who witnessed the accident dared venture it. While they were seeking other means of rescue, she clambered down and saved the babe. It is not known what assistance was rendered her in getting out, but it is said that she was utterly exhausted and almost unconscious when she reached the top of the well.

The loving, sympathetic, and heroic character of this mother, and the thrift and energy of the father, could hardly fail of beneficent effect upon their children. It is from the influence of such parentage that achievements which have made many a man famous have derived their inspiration.

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The James home in Hull was a commodious dwelling of the simple style of the period, built on an eminence overlooking the bay, by Mrs. James' family, and purchased by her husband soon after their marriage. Like most of his countrymen, William James was a Lutheran. It was his custom to read Luther's version of the Bible daily from a volume in his mother tongue brought with him from Holland. The children, as soon as they were large enough, were required to read from the Bible every morning, using the King James version in the English language. The family attended the Methodist Episcopal church, the only Protestant church in the village, and all took part in the Sunday School, either as

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teachers or scholars. Captain James, in his spare time at home, conducted a singing class. Music was the chief recreation of the family, each member learning to play one or more instruments. A story current among the older residents of Hull indicates that Captain James had exceptional musical talent. It is to the effect that, when a young man, he applied to a music teacher for lessons, stating that he did not know a note. The teacher began by pointing out at some length the value and significance of the written musical symbols, the pupil in the meantime impatiently asking about advanced lessons. When the teacher was through he was much surprised at the young man's question, "Is that all there is to it?" and ironically re-

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plied that it was all! In less than a year young James was successfully teaching a singing class of his own. Shortly afterward he acquired proficiency on the clarinet, and was engaged to play with the noted bugler, Ned Kendall, in Boston and elsewhere. His musical talent was transmitted in a large degree to his descendants, even to the third and fourth generations. A great-granddaughter, Mme. Bernice de Pasquali, daughter of Captain William W. James, was honored by being selected as the only soloist to sing before the Prince of Wales and other dignitaries at the State concert in commemoration of the founding of Quebec, in July, 1908, and upon the recent retirement of the celebrated Madame Sembrich,

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succeeded that prima donna in the Metropolitan Opera Company, New York City.

Joshua, who was the ninth of twelve children, was born November 22, 1826. He was a most amiable and affectionate child, always thoughtful of others, scrupulously conscientious and singularly careful of everything placed in his charge. He was spoken of in the family as a "great caretaker." His sister Catherine, five years his senior, who tended him from babyhood and upon whom, at the age of fifteen, fell the care of the family upon the death of their mother, and who, therefore, probably better understood his character and temperament than anyone else, often declared he was unlike other boys.



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She used to say there was a certain thoughtfulness and reserve about him that distinguished him from other children, and his unerring judgment and ability to deal with perplexing situations made him a leader among them. He was beloved by his brothers, idolized by his sisters, and was the favorite of his father, who often remarked that God had especially blessed him in the gift of such a noble son. That the boy was father to the man in his spirit of unselfishness and generosity is shown by the fact that, when a mere lad, he was not only willing to share anything he had with others, but often gave them all, strenuously insisting, however, that the division among them should be "share and share alike." This self-sacrific-

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ing spirit and insistence upon fair play were manifested throughout his life.

On April 3, 1837, when he was but ten years of age, Joshua was called upon to bear the first and perhaps the greatest sorrow of his life in the tragic death of his mother and baby sister. Mrs. James was returning from a visit to Boston in the schooner *Hepzibah*, a paving-stone vessel owned by her son Reinier. As they were passing through the treacherous Hull Gut a sudden squall threw the vessel on her beam ends, and she filled and sank before Mrs. James and her baby, who were in the cabin, could be rescued. His sister Catherine states that Joshua bore his great sorrow heroically. He could not shed a tear,

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although his young heart was bursting with grief. It made a great and lasting impression upon him, and undoubtedly had an important influence in shaping his subsequent career as an indefatigable life-saver; for "ever after that," said his sister, "he seemed to be scanning the sea in quest of imperiled lives." It is a singular circumstance that the vessel in which Mrs. James was drowned belonged to the son whom she had saved from drowning in the well in his infancy. Had she not succeeded in saving him, perhaps her own life had not been lost in this tragic manner, and her son Joshua might never have been led to consecrate his life to the rescue of others from a similar fate.

Joshua was a great reader even in

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his boyhood days, his choice being books of a historic and scientific character; notably, and perhaps very naturally, those on astronomy, so intimately associated with a sailor's profession. His preference for practical literature may have been due in some part to his mother, who prohibited the reading of novels and fiction of all kinds. She forbade the neighbors lending her children novels, and on one occasion destroyed a beautiful and expensive copy of "The Children of the Abbey," which she found in the hands of one of her daughters. The father's strict religious views also no doubt largely guided the children in their choice of reading.

At a very early age Joshua began to go to sea with his father and elder

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brothers. His fondness for astronomy here stood him in good turn, and he soon became an expert navigator. His father in later years was fond of relating an incident illustrative of Joshua's good seamanship and the confidence reposed in him by other sailors. During a voyage in unfamiliar waters the helmsman lost his bearings one night. This fact was not known to the captain for several hours, and when he learned of it he was unable to determine the position of the vessel, which had sailed a long distance off her course. As a last resort, Joshua, who had been asleep through it all, was called on deck and the situation laid before him. He carefully scanned the heavens for a minute through his sleepy, half-open

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eyes, then confidently laid down the course, remarking that in two hours a certain light would be made, and returned to his bunk in a most matter-of-fact way. In one hour and fifty-five minutes the light he had mentioned was sighted. How Joshua's casual examination of the stars could enable him so accurately to judge of the distance and location of the lighthouse may not be obvious, but his good guess (if such it was) might very naturally have been attributed by the skipper to his superior scientific acquirements. On another occasion, when he was sailing a yacht into Boston, all bearings were apparently lost in a dense fog. Someone asked him where they were, and he promptly and positively replied, "We are just off

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Long Island head." "How can you tell that?" asked his incredulous questioner. "I can hear the land talk," was the terse reply. Shortly after, when the fog lifted, his judgment was found to be correct, as they were then directly off the island. This illustrates his marvelous knowledge of the topography of the coast and harbor, and the conditions prevailing at different points, acquired by observant eyes and quick ears. It is the same acuteness of the perceptive faculties that characterized the celebrated Maine steamship captain who for more than twenty years is said to have regularly navigated his vessel in the thickest fogs and darkest nights through the tortuous reaches, thoroughfares, and channels of the "inside passage"

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along the coast of Maine, without accident. When asked for an explanation of his remarkable record he replied, "I knew the bark of every dog and the crow of every rooster on the line, and often steered by them." That is one way the land "talks" to the coastwise sailor, as well as by the varying sounds of the surf beating on the shelving beaches, the ledges, or the precipitous rocks that mark different localities. A good interpreter of the language of the shore possesses one of the prime qualifications of what sailors call a "natural pilot" — and Joshua James was a "natural pilot" in an unusual degree.

Captain William James continued in the paving-stone trade between Hull and Boston until cobblestones



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were generally supplanted by the more modern paving materials. He at one time had a large contract for filling in the west end of the city of Boston, and owned a fleet of twelve vessels of from 50 to 125 tons burden. It was his practice to give each of his sons, on reaching his majority, a complete outfit for the business, including a new schooner. Joshua, therefore, with his deep love of the sea, his early training on his father's and brothers' vessels, and with such an outfit provided, very naturally entered the same business, going into lightering and freight-carrying for himself at the age of twenty-five. Captain James, as he now came to be called, continued in his chosen profession until his appointment as keep-

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er of the Point Allerton life-saving station upon its establishment in 1889.

In 1830 John Lucihe, an Austrian gentleman of more than ordinary culture and business ability, settled in Hull and soon after became the agent of the Tudor Ice Company of Boston. He married Eliza T. Lovell, a third cousin of the subject of this sketch, and a descendant of the early English settlers of Hull. When Joshua was sixteen years of age there was born to this family a daughter. Little Louisa, as she was named, soon became a favorite with her sturdy fourth cousin, and their mutual love and friendship increased with the years as the baby girl grew to womanhood. She attended the village school and later the East Greenwich (R. I.)

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Seminary, a Methodist institution, while Joshua passed from boyhood to mature manhood, prospering in his chosen calling and winning unheeded laurels as a life-saver. In 1858, when Louisa was but sixteen years of age, and Joshua was twice that number, they were married, and, as the fairy tales have it, "lived happily ever after"—in this case the actual truth. When the writer expressed some surprise at the disparity in their ages, Mrs. James, now a feeble grandmother, smiled as she naively explained that Joshua had always had his eye on her, and waited for her to "grow up." And well he might, for Louisa Lucie possessed unusual beauty of face and figure, as well as rare sweetness of disposition and

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marked intelligence. Her mental graces she still retains, to the great comfort and blessing of her children and grandchildren, and notwithstanding her advancing years, her face is still beautiful, and her sweet, captivating smile and charming manners endear her to all who know her. They were a remarkably well-matched couple, for Joshua was an exceptionally handsome, well-built man, with a genial face and a fund of good-humor that made it a pleasure to be in his company. Another thing they had in common; they were both life-savers. Two years before their marriage, when Louisa was bathing in the ocean with a number of other girls, one of them who was visiting in Hull and evidently unfamiliar with the

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beach, went beyond her depth and would have drowned but for Louisa Lucihe, who saw the danger and bravely plunged in and rescued her.

Captain James was an ardent lover and a true and affectionate husband and father. About a year after their marriage he purchased the house which is still occupied by his widow and three daughters. Ten children, eight girls and two boys, came to bless their home. Three of the daughters and one son died in infancy and early childhood. The other son, Osceola F. James, born in 1865, grew to be a sturdy man and followed in his father's footsteps both as a sailor and a life-saver. He is now master of the steamer *Myles Standish*, plying between Boston and Nantasket Beach

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each summer. He is also captain of the Hull volunteer life-savers, with a record approaching that of his father, whom he succeeded as keeper of the Humane Society's boats when the latter became keeper of the Government life-saving station. Two of the daughters, Louisa Julette and Edith Gertrude, are married, while the three younger, Bertha Coleta, Rozelle Francesca, and Genevieve Endola, have remained with their mother.

As was to be expected, the home life of this family was a happy one, marred only by the death of the four little ones, whose loss was deeply felt by Captain James and his good wife. Next to the tragic death of his mother in his early childhood Captain James mourned the loss of his baby son and

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three little girls to the end of his days.

Captain James, like his father, was a lover of music, as were all the children. At one time the James Orchestra, composed of members of the family, flourished. The youngest daughter is an accomplished violinist, and is also organist of the Methodist church in Hull. In addition to music Captain James was fond of chess and checkers, and many a winter evening was agreeably spent in these absorbing games. With these amusements and his insatiable love of good reading, in addition to his out-of-doors activities, Captan James' life was a full and well-rounded one. The family was noted for its hospitality, and with five attractive and accomplished young

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ladies in the home, it is easy to believe that there was no lack of company. The James home was doubtless a social center in the little fishing village, around which gather many pleasant memories.

Joshua James was not professedly a religious man, although brought up in the Methodist church. He believed in a God as the supreme ruler of the universe, but did not accept a revealed religion. The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man sufficed for him as a creed.

Space will not permit more to be said of Captain James' family life; nor is it necessary. The intimate details, embracing joys and sorrows, triumphs and disappointments, successes and reverses — in short, all the little



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incidents which go to make up the sum of daily life, and which are usually of only fleeting interest even to the members of each little family group, are repeated in every true home with only the variations due to environment and circumstances. It is enough to know that this was a typical home of the "common people" of its day and place, its inmates neither rich nor poor, neither high nor low — of that honest, sturdy manhood and womanhood which constitute the bulk and strength of every nation.

Joshua James' career as a life-saver began in the lifeboats of the Massachusetts Humane Society at the early age of fifteen, when he was one of a crew that rescued the sailors from a

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shipwrecked vessel. Very little can be learned of this incident. It appears that the vessel, of a name long since forgotten, was wrecked early in 1842 on Harding's Ledge, a dangerous collection of bare rocks about four miles eastward of Hull. The lifeboat, as usual, was manned by volunteers, and after it had put off for the wreck, the boy Joshua was found to be among the crew. It is not known what part he took in the rescue of the shipwrecked sailors, but the eagerness to be of service which led him to go in the boat justifies the assumption that he gave a good account of himself.

Unfortunately, the archives of the Massachusetts Humane Society were destroyed in the great Boston fire of

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1872, and a complete account of Captain James' services in the Society's boats is not, therefore, accessible. The authenticity of this story of his first rescue, notwithstanding the scantiness of the family traditions, is substantiated, however, by a medal and certificate awarded him many years later (1886) which acknowledges his services in the Society's boats from the age of fifteen. The absence of any account of this and other rescues in subsequent lists of rewards granted by the Society prior to the fire is doubtless due to the neglect of Captain James and his family to respond to the invitation to report errors and omissions. In a "History of the Humane Society," published in 1877, are found the following items:

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“ 1844. To Moses B. Tower, John W. Tower, William James, and five others, for their humane and heroic exertions in saving, by the Life-Boat of the Society stationed at Hull, the officers and crew of the brig Tremont, of New York, wrecked on Point Alderton Bar in a violent gale, on Monday, Oct. 7th, ten dollars in money to each, together with the Society's gold medal to Capt. Tower, in token of the approbation of the Trustees of his and their meritorious conduct.”

“ 1845. To nine of the first crew of the Society's boat at Hull, for their gallant though unsuccessful attempt to rescue those on board the ship Massachusetts, wrecked on 11th of December, at Point Alderton, . . . \$90.

“ To seven of the crew of the Society's boat at Hull, who made a second gallant and successful attempt and succeeded in rescuing Captain Berry and eleven others, from the

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ship *Massasoit*, wrecked at Point Alderton, Dec. 11th, . . . \$105.

Joshua probably participated in one or both of these rescues, in connection with one of which his father is especially mentioned. It is known from other sources that he took a very active part in the rescue of a shipwrecked crew in 1845, which was probably that of the *Massasoit*; but it seems that already his proclivities in this line had become so much a matter of course to his family that none of those now living is able to recall particular occasions. It is well established, however, that during his youth and early manhood he saved and assisted to save many persons from drowning.

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His first medal was one of bronze,  
inscribed

TO JOSHUA JAMES

FOR

MERITORIOUS EXERTIONS IN RESCUING  
THE CREW OF THE FRENCH BRIG L'ESSAI,  
WRECKED AT  
NANTASKET BEACH, APRIL 1, 1850.

This was followed by a certificate  
embellished with the pictures of the  
members of his crew, for saving the  
crew of the ship *Delaware*, in 1857,  
which reads as follows:

TO JOSHUA JAMES

FOR HIS PERSEVERING EFFORTS IN  
RESCUING THE OFFICERS AND  
CREW OF SHIP DELAWARE  
ON TODDY ROCKS  
MAR. 2, 1857.

In 1864 he assisted in the rescue of  
the crew of the brig *Swordfish*, but  
the report for that year is not at hand.

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The next item is one in the report for 1871, as follows:

"At the meeting on the 6th January, 1871, the case of the schooner William R. Genn was attended to by awarding the Captain, J. G. Small, \$15, and \$10 to each of the crew of the lifeboat, consisting of nine men.

"The schooner was stranded on Nantasket Beach on the evening of the 23d December, in a snowstorm. About 7 o'clock the Long Beach Life-Boat put off; she was once filled with water and obliged to return to the beach: was again put off, after clearing her of water, and succeeded in rescuing the crew, including the Captain and four men. An attempt had been made to land in their own boat, but she got adrift and was thrown up on the beach with one man in her. Considering the severity of the weather and the fact that the crew of the lifeboat went off without their lifebelts and without inflating the floats, there was great risk in the operation."

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The Captain Small referred to was evidently the master of the wrecked vessel, for a complete roster of the lifeboat crew given in lists of awards published in subsequent reports, shows that Captain James was in command of the boat.

In March, 1873, Joshua was one of the boat's crew which rescued the crew of the schooner *Helene*, as appears from the following account in the "History":

"To James Lowe, George Augustus, William James, Jr., Samuel, John, and Washington James, Andrew Calender, Lewis and Nicholas Sirovick, Alonzo Mitchell, and Andrew J. Pope, crew of the Society's Stony Beach Boat, and to James W., Eben S., and B. I. Pope, Joshua, W. W., and Phineas James, Jr., and W. B. Mitchell, crew of the Society's Point



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Allerton Boat, for their gallant and successful efforts in rescuing the captain and crew of the schooner 'Helene,' wrecked on Point Allerton Bar, twenty dollars each, . . . \$380 "

In 1876 the Society recognized the services of Captain James by appointing him Keeper of four of their lifeboats located at Stony Beach, Point Allerton, and Nantasket Beach (2), also of a mortar station at the first-named place, to which was later added a boat at Gun Rock Cove, Cohasset. This position he held until his appointment as keeper of the Government station at Point Allerton.

In the 1882 report the following entry speaks for itself:

" Boat No. 21 was launched about 2 a. m., February 1st, 1882 (during a very heavy gale and thick snow-

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storm), and took off the crew of the schooner 'Bucephalus,' which had gone ashore on Nantasket Beach. At 8 a. m., the same day, Boat No. 18 saved the crew of the schooner 'Nellie Walker,' ashore on Toddy Rocks."

Subsequent lists of awards giving a roster of the boats' crews, show that Captain James was in command at both of these wrecks. The work performed was evidently regarded by the Society as exceptionally good, as the men were awarded the unusual sum of \$25 each.

The report for 1886 contains the following items:

"On Dec. 1, 1885, the brig 'Anita Owen' went ashore on Nantasket Beach and was lost. Capt. Joshua James and crew of ten men launched the Life-Boat No. 20, about midnight, and with great difficulty rescued the

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crew in two trips. Ten persons were saved. Captain James and each of his crew were awarded \$10."

"The 'Millie Trim' went ashore on Calf Island the morning of January 9, 1886. All the crew were lost but the captain, who landed on the island, and was cared for by the people. Capt. Joshua James, seeing a signal on the Island, launched the Life-Boat No. 17, and got the captain, putting him on a tug for Boston. The crew of the Life-boat were awarded \$6 each."

Captain James' own description of the wreck of the *Anita Owen*, as given to a press correspondent many years after, is so characteristic of the man and so typical of the inherent modesty of life-savers in general that it is given in full herewith.

"While trying to make Boston harbor in a northeast gale December

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1, 1885, the brig lost her bearings and came to anchor just outside the breakers off Nantasket Beach. She was safe as long as her anchors and chains held fast, but about midnight she parted her cable and came into the breakers. It was blowing a gale with thick snow and very dark. At that time I was in charge of the Massachusetts Society's boats on Nantasket Beach. We had seen the vessel come to anchor just before dark, and, realizing her possible danger, made everything ready to go to her assistance, one of our crew keeping watch on the beach in order to give the alarm should she come ashore. Before parting her chains she lay about 300 yards off shore, where, through the darkness, we could catch an occasional

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glimpse of her lights swaying to and fro as she pitched about. A few moments after she took bottom we were abreast of her on the beach, with the lifeboat. We answered a signal torch from the wreck, then ran our boat into the surf and jumped in. When about halfway out we shipped a big sea that filled the boat to her thwarts, at the same time forcing her back on the beach. We hauled her up, cleared her of water and launched again. This time we got quite close to the vessel, and found her awash with the sea breaking over her forward and amidships. It seems that the captain had cut away the foremast as soon as she stranded, to minimize the danger to the crew and lessen the chances of her breaking up, and as we came up

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close a torch on board showed the broken mast and yards hammering her sides, and, fortunately, enabled us to keep clear of them. The cabin house aft was out of water. Here the crew had taken shelter. It seemed almost impossible to get alongside, as there was a heavy sea running around her stern, causing our boat to ship large quantities of water, which made it necessary for two of our men to be constantly bailing. The captain hailed us and shouted that there were ten persons on board, among them his wife. I called back that we could take off but five, and told him to keep a light burning. Then I directed him to lower one person at a time by a rope, with instructions to drop when we were in the right position. We

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watched our chance and made a dash for the ship. The captain's wife was the first to swing over, but she did not let go when the signal was given, and the next instant the boat was swept out of reach. The second attempt was successful, although she did not drop at the right moment and came near falling between the boat and the wreck. Luckily, as she fell one of us caught her and pulled her into the boat. We took four others off in the same manner, and then came the danger of landing. There is always great danger in getting back to shore under such circumstances, as the rescued persons interfere with the work of the oarsmen. As we backed toward the beach, keeping head to the sea, a big breaker struck us, filling the

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boat to the thwarts and driving her swiftly up the beach, but without worse mishap to us than a thorough drenching. The second trip was more perilous than the first, owing to drift wreckage and the loss of the boat's steering oar. While taking off the first load we were greatly assisted by the ship's torches, which enabled us to keep out of the way of the debris beating her sides, but the seas that now washed over her made it impossible to keep anything burning on board, and the darkness prevented our seeing the men distinctly. By persevering, however, we came alongside again without injury to the boat, but we were kept busy dodging the wreckage. The balance of the crew had to lower themselves as best they could,



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making flying jumps, and trusting to luck for the rest. One of the men taken off, a tall negro, was working his passage as assistant cook. In his leap to the boat he held tightly in one hand an umbrella and a walking stick. These articles were the only personal effects saved, and when we reached shore he walked up the beach clinging to them as though they were of more value than life, presenting a ludicrous picture in the midst of grave surroundings."

Just a matter-of-fact account of the difficulties of the work, giving the fine points of the game, as it were, such as one might employ in the description of a baseball game or other athletic sport. In telling the story nearly sixteen years later, the point that seemed

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to stand out most prominently in his mind was the incident of the negro cook with his umbrella! The courage and self-sacrifice, the skill and ingenuity, the almost superhuman endeavors of these fearless men as they freely took their lives in their hands to save those others out there in the darkness, amidst the thunder of the surf breaking with terrific force on the beach and hidden rocks, the dashing spray that froze as it touched their skin and clothing, forming a sheathing of ice on boat and men, the floating spars and wreckage momentarily threatening their boat with destruction — these are hardly suggested.

In 1886 the Society presented Captain James with a large silver medal

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struck especially for him, bearing the following inscription :

TO  
CAPT. JOSHUA JAMES

FOR BRAVE AND  
FAITHFUL SERVICE  
OF MORE THAN  
40 YEARS IN THE  
LIFEBOATS OF THE  
HUMANE SOCIETY.

1886.

The Humane Society's report for 1888 contains the following minute with reference to the award of this medal:

" Dec. 19, 1885. To Captain Joshua James, the silver medal of the Society and \$50, in recognition of his conspicuous bravery and ability during his connection with the Society's lifeboats from the year 1842, when he was only 15 years of age. During

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this time he assisted in saving over 100 lives. The Society in sending him the above reward desires to offer its congratulations and thanks for exceptionally gallant service."

In 1889 Captain James received the gold medal of the Society, inscribed as follows:

TO  
CAPTAIN JOSHUA JAMES  
FOR HIS HUMANE EXERTIONS  
IN RESCUING THE LIVES  
OF  
TWENTY-NINE PERSONS  
FROM  
FOUR VESSELS  
ON NOV. 25 AND 26, 1888.

For this service Captain James and ten members of his volunteer crews also received the gold medal awarded by the United States Government for exceptional daring in saving life from shipwreck.

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Considering the disheartening conditions under which most of their successes were achieved, the record made in that memorable storm by Captain James and his brave volunteers in attending upon five wrecked vessels scattered over nearly eight miles of beach, and saving the lives of twenty-nine persons, without the loss or serious injury of a single member of his crew or any of the shipwrecked sailors whom it was within human power to save, is one that has rarely been surpassed.

A connected narrative of the occurrences at each successive scene of disaster — although no pen can fittingly describe them — will convey some idea of the nature of the work the life-savers performed and the

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hardships they endured on this occasion.

The storm embraced in its course the entire Atlantic seaboard and swept up the coast with the suddenness and violence of a tropical hurricane, leaving in its wake a chain of wrecks from the Carolinas to Maine. It struck Massachusetts Bay on Sunday, the 25th, unheralded by the usual storm warnings of the Weather Bureau, and came in the guise of a northeast gale and snowstorm, accompanied by extremely high tides and a tremendous surf. Subsequently it ceased snowing, sleet and rain succeeding. So terrible a storm in November had never before been known in Hull. Early in the day Captain James and a few hardy beachmen, having climbed to

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the top of Telegraph Hill for observation, saw through the driving snow, before the air became too thick to make them out, several schooners anchored in the offing, which they felt sure must sooner or later yield to the growing fury of the storm and drift ashore in spite of their dragging anchors. He therefore notified his volunteers to be ready for service, and about two o'clock ordered a patrol all along the ocean shore. The patrol had hardly begun when a large three-masted schooner which proved to be the *Cox and Green*, was discovered broadside on the beach just north of the Toddy Rocks. The gale was now intense, and it was with much difficulty that the Hunt gun, breeches-buoy apparatus, and lifeboat were dragged

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against it half a mile from the Stony Beach station to the scene of the wreck. In the meantime the vessel had been forced near enough inshore by the heaving surges to readily admit of the use of the breeches-buoy apparatus, rendering this first task of the life-savers a comparatively easy one. Without delay Captain James proceeded to fire a line aboard, which was soon followed by the whipline, hawser, and breeches-buoy; and although the process of rescue under the prevailing conditions was necessarily difficult and tedious, the nine men were, one by one, safely landed on the beach, whence they were taken to a nearby cottage and ministered to by sympathizing hands.

It had now become quite dark, but



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another three-masted schooner, the *Gertrude Abbott*, could be dimly discerned upon the rocks an eighth of a mile farther up the beach, and to this point Captain James and his men laboriously transferred their boat and apparatus. This wreck gave them a far more serious problem to deal with. A brief survey of the situation showed that the vessel lay too far from shore for the use of the breeches-buoy apparatus, and that to attempt a rescue with the lifeboat under the present appalling conditions of wind and sea was an undertaking which, to all appearances, invited certain death. Captain James warned his crew that the chances were they would never return from an attempt to save the shipwrecked men, but asked who were

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willing to go with him and make the effort. Without a moment's hesitation every man offered himself, and they ran the boat into the water and started for the wreck. In the meantime the people, by tearing down fences, had gathered material for a great bonfire on Souther's Hill, which lit up the scene in spite of the storm, greatly assisting the boat's crew in their desperate struggle, and carrying renewed hope to the despairing fellows on board the wreck. The boat was repeatedly filled as the huge waves swept over it, disputing every inch of the way and often forcing it back into imminent peril of being dashed to pieces on the rocks. Two men were constantly occupied in bailing. At length the powerful strokes

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of the crew brought the boat under the schooner's bow, a line was thrown aboard and made fast by the sailors, and as the boat rose high on the crest of a wave one of them dropped into the outstretched arms below. This was repeated until all of the eight men were successively taken into the boat. But the hardest part of the struggle was yet before them, and the danger of which Captain James had warned his men now became terribly apparent. To reach the shore with their heavy load through the riot of waters raging between was a task which called not only for all their strength and endurance, but also the utmost skill and self-possession. As they approached the shore the crowd which had gathered there expected momentarily to see the

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frail craft tossed upon the rocks and crushed like an eggshell. The men, however, stuck desperately to their posts, and watched for a chance to make a landing, although repeatedly drenched by the overwhelming seas. When within two hundred yards of the beach the boat struck a submerged boulder, filled and rolled one side under water. The occupants quickly shifted to the other side, which righted the boat, but one man had been thrown overboard, whom, fortunately, his comrades caught and hauled in before the sea could sweep him beyond reach. Captain James admonished the men to stick to the boat as long as possible. It struck the rocks a number of times, the crew just managing to keep it headed for

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the shore with the few oars that were left, so that the sea might heave it in. Finally a monster wave lifted it high in the air and dashed it upon the rocks, completely wrecked. By fortunate chance, however, all the men got ashore, half wading and half dragged by the eager hands of the spectators who rushed into the surf as far as possible to assist them.

It was nine o'clock when the last man was safe on shore. Captain James and his men at once resumed the patrol of the beach, which they continued throughout the bitter night, unmindful of the tempest raging about them. Often they had to wade deep gullies, with difficulty avoiding the wreckage that was thrashing about in the surf, and now and again they

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had to run for their lives to escape an exceptionally high sea that chased them up the beach and threatened to engulf them.

About three o'clock in the morning they discovered the third three-masted schooner, the *Bertha F. Walker*, ashore about half a mile northwest of the *Abbott*. She, also, was beyond the range of the shotline, and they now had to go all the way to the Strawberry Hill station, four miles distant, for a boat to replace the one wrecked the night before. This was a new boat, recently built from a design by Captain James' brother Samuel, which had not yet been tested in actual wreck work. It was a cruel trick of fate to thus add to the perils of such a storm the anxiety naturally

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felt about the possible behavior of an unfamiliar boat; for it is almost an axiom upon the coast that surfmen will undertake and successfully accomplish a difficult enterprise in a boat of a model with which they are thoroughly acquainted, when they would utterly fail in a strange craft, though the latter might be much the better boat. With the help of horses and many willing hands, the boat was at length brought to the scene of the wreck, quickly manned by the tireless crew, and after a hard struggle with mountainous seas, in which the boat proved itself entirely satisfactory, the seven surviving sailors were taken safely ashore. The captain and mate of this vessel had been drowned during the night, when the crew were

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forced to abandon their shelter under the forecastle deck and take to the rigging. They had remained behind to see all the others safely aloft, and before they could join them, were washed overboard by a huge sea and never seen again.

Before the rescue of the *Walker's* crew was completed, a messenger on horseback arrived from Atlantic Hill, more than five miles away, with news of two more wrecks at that point. The Hull men had had no breakfast, some had had little supper the night before, and most had been on the beach all night. But they did not falter. As soon as their work at the *Walker* was done they started with their boat for this new scene of disaster. Captain Anderson of the



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Humane Society's station at Crescent Beach, and Captain Brown of the Government life-saving station at North Scituate had also been notified. Captain Anderson reached the point first with his Hunt gun and apparatus, and turned his attention to the lower of the two wrecks, the schooner *H. C. Higginson*, which lay sunk, decks under, between two ledges, with five men clinging to the rigging. After he had fired several lines which, unfortunately, parted and failed to reach the vessel, Captain Brown and his crew arrived, having pulled their Lyle gun and apparatus through mud and slush a distance of nearly nine miles, and immediately fired a line which fell across the flying jibstay. Almost simultaneously Captain Ander-

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son succeeded in getting a line aboard, and as this fell closer to the men in the fore rigging, they got hold of it, paying no further heed to the other line. The poor fellows succeeded in pulling the whip and hawser aboard and making them fast at the mast-head. The outlook was now very hopeful, and the breeches-buoy was about to be sent out, when a most unfortunate accident occurred. The lines, tossed about by the waves, in some way fouled with some floating wreckage, and, despite the utmost efforts of the life-saving men, could not be freed, thus rendering their further use impossible. The life-savers and others on shore were in despair, and thought they would have to see the poor sailors go down to death before

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their eyes. At this juncture Captain James and his men arrived with their boat, and as nothing further could be done with the breeches-buoy apparatus, they at once launched, selecting a place slightly sheltered by a projecting point, and started on their third trip into the very jaws of death. The sea had gained in fury, if such a thing were possible, the immense ridges of foam-crested surf bristling before them and advancing rank upon rank like a phalanx to meet them, seemed unconquerable, and there was scarcely a hope that they would be able to reach the wreck, if indeed they themselves escaped alive. The skillful maneuvering of Captain James at the steering oar and the unsurpassed surf-manship and coolness of his crew,

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however, carried them safely through the surf, but they fought in vain against the heavy seas beyond to round the rocky point, and after a struggle of three-quarters of an hour, they had to give it up and were washed ashore with two holes stove in their new boat. Patching the boat as well as possible, they dragged it to another place and launched again. It was only after a long and desperate battle with the surf, during which they were in the direst peril, that they reached the vessel. The sailors had now been in the tops fourteen hours, and in their exhausted and benumbed condition could do little to help themselves. Great care had to be exercised to prevent the boat from being dashed against the vessel and crushed.

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Four men in the foretop and one in the mizzen were all that were alive on board. The body of the steward, who had perished from exposure during the night, was lashed to the foretopmast. The boat could come up only under the vessel's stern, and four of the men were at the other end. The man in the mizzentop cautiously descended the shrouds until he reached a position where he could catch a line thrown to him, which he tied about his waist, and, at the word of command, jumped into the sea and was quickly hauled into the lifeboat. "Now for the men in the foretop!" was the cry, and the crew strained every muscle to the utmost in repeated attempts to force the boat as far forward as the foremast. But their

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most strenuous efforts could bring it no farther than abreast the mainmast. It was therefore necessary for the sailors to get across the intervening distance. There were but two ways that this could be done. One was to come across hand over hand on the spring stay, a distance of twenty feet, and this was hopeless in their exhausted condition. The other, hardly better, was to slide down the hawser which had been sent aboard and made fast in the attempt to set up the breeches-buoy apparatus, and which was now trailing toward the mainmast, and gain a footing in the main rigging if possible. Quickly they chose the latter course, and one of them commenced the perilous descent, taking the desperate chance for

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life. It appeared every moment as if the swaying form would lose its hold and be swept away by the hungry waves which seemed to be leaping and stretching upward to seize him and plunge him into the sea below. Slowly he came down, but surely, and at last caught the main rigging. Here a rope was thrown to him, and, tying it about his body, he jumped overboard and was hauled into the boat. In like manner, fortunately without mishap, the three remaining men, to whom, as in the case of their shipmate, the crisis seemed to lend superhuman strength, made their way down and were taken off. When the last man was safe in the boat a mighty shout went up from those on shore, and still a mightier and more victorious

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one when, after a long and desperate struggle, requiring the most skillful maneuvering to prevent a capsize in the surf, the boat came within reach of the eager hands stretched out to drag ashore the shipwrecked seamen and their heroic rescuers. Carriages were at hand to take the poor sailors, all but dead from their terrible experience, to the homes in the vicinity, which were freely thrown open to them, and a physician among the spectators rendered medical assistance. The body of the steward was left bound to the topmast, presenting, as it swayed back and forth through the air with every undulation of the sea, a ghastly spectacle to the people who came to the shore in great numbers to view the desolation wrought by the



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storm. It was not until late the next day that it was found possible to remove it.

The other wreck at this point was the schooner *Mattie E. Eaton*, which the sea had forced almost high and dry upon the beach, so that the crew had got ashore themselves at low tide, and as no assistance was required, the Hull men now took advantage of the opportunity to partake of much-needed refreshments. Then, having rested awhile, they made preparations to return to their homes. By this time the storm had somewhat abated. When about halfway they came upon the abandoned brigantine *Alice*, which had parted her moorings at Gloucester and been driven across the Bay, and after a line had been fired

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over her by Captain Brown and no one appeared to take it, Captain James and his men went aboard and found her deserted. Two men who soon after boarded her in a dory, were left on board by their boat breaking away, and the life-savers went back and took them off.

When their work was done, Captain James and his men had to show as trophies of their valor twenty-nine human lives, all the rescued being in a more or less pitiful plight from their terrible experience, it is true — but saved!

While Captain James was present and in command throughout the twenty-four hours consumed by these operations, only four of his crew took

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part in all the trips, out of a total of twenty men engaged.

The great loss of life and property on the shores of Massachusetts Bay resulting from this storm, emphasized the need of additional Government life-saving stations, with full equipment and regularly enlisted, paid, and drilled crews. The numerous disasters which occurred in the immediate vicinity of Hull, as well as the exceptionally good work done by the volunteer crews of that place, led to the establishment, early in the year 1889, of a station at Stony Beach. When the station was nearing completion, in the fall of that year, and the selection of a suitable man as keeper was in order, there was never

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a doubt as to the right man for the place. Captain Joshua James, whose long and distinguished record had reached a fitting climax on that memorable November Sunday, was the first and only choice, notwithstanding his ineligibility under the regulations of the Service, which prescribe the age limit for keepers at the time of their appointment as forty-five years. His appointment at the age of sixty-two is the only instance in the history of the Service in which this regulation has been waived, an exception which was amply justified by his magnificent record during the subsequent twelve years of his service. On October 22, 1889, he took the oath of office as Keeper of the United States Life-Saving Station at Point Allerton.

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When the station was fully completed and equipped and ready to go into commission, on the first of March following, he chose for his crew seven able and fearless men, who, like himself, had been tried and proven in many a perilous adventure.

Captain James maintained at his station a standard of discipline and a degree of efficiency which stood him in good stead on many trying occasions. It may here be mentioned that the saving of property is a duty imposed upon the crews of life-saving stations. This, of course, is secondary and subordinate to the saving of life, but its importance is shown by the fact that the amount of property saved annually far exceeds the entire cost of maintaining the Service. The

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official records show that eighty-six casualties occurred within the field of operations of the Point Allerton station while under Captain James' charge. There were on board these vessels 556 persons, and the estimated value of the vessels and their cargoes was \$1,203,435. Of this property approximately three-fourths was saved. Of the 556 persons imperiled, but 16 lost their lives. All of these were lost from wrecks which occurred during one terrible night under circumstances which placed them beyond the reach of human aid and which precluded even an attempt being made to assist them. This was the fateful night of November 26-27, 1898, which will be referred to hereafter.

To give in this brief sketch a com-

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plete and chronological history of Captain James' work as keeper of the Point Allerton station is impracticable. Each separate occasion on which he rendered service had its own distinctive features more or less interesting, but here the story of only a single instance can be given.

On the morning of December 16, 1896, the British three-masted schooner *Ulrica*, bound from Hillsboro, Nova Scotia, to Hoboken, New Jersey, with a cargo of plaster, was stripped of her sails during a northeast gale and thick snowstorm, and left to drift helplessly about for several hours, dragging her anchors. She finally stranded about eight o'clock, nearly three miles south of the Point Allerton station. The pa-

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trolman on his beat promptly discovered her, and immediately ran to a farmhouse nearby and engaged a team of horses to haul the Humane Society's lifeboat *Nantasket*, which was housed not far away, to the scene of the disaster. Giving the necessary instructions to the owner of the team, he hastened back to his station to report the wreck and call out the crew. In the meantime word had reached Captain James by telephone, and while the crew were making ready to start, the electric train from Boston arrived. The trainmaster, upon learning the situation, promptly put the cars at their service, and took Captain James and several of the surfmen to the wreck, while a portion



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of the crew stayed behind to bring up the beach-apparatus. The team with the boat arrived simultaneously with Captain James and his men, and no time was lost in launching, half a dozen volunteers from the Humane Society's crews making up the necessary number of oarsmen. About five hundred yards off shore, fast settling in the soft sands, at the mercy of the sea, loomed the naked spars and white hull of the doomed vessel, the flooding seas constantly sweeping her fore and aft, reaching high up in the rigging, again and again drenching the seven half-frozen men of her crew, and covering everything with a thick coating of ice. Two or three of the sailors could be seen clinging to the

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icy ropes, while the rest were huddled on top of the cabin as far as possible out of reach of the sea.

The lifeboat had scarcely been gotten afloat when a great wave tossed her like a feather far up the beach, spilling part of her crew. Nothing daunted, they repeated the attempt, and a second time they were flung back. The third time they were more successful, and amid the lusty cheers of the crowd gathered on the shore, they pulled away, the sea contesting every foot of the advance. They had made perhaps half the distance to the wreck when a tremendous sea bore down upon them and, seizing the boat, raised it almost to a vertical position, wrenched the steering oar from the hands of the captain, and

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pitched him headlong into the sea, where the boat passed completely over him. The crew, by a desperate effort, kept their places, and the next instant they were irresistibly swept back to the beach, dragging with them the captain, who, as he came up, had grasped a surfman's oar, and managed to keep his hold upon it.

Without a moment's hesitation, as if such an experience were a regular part of his day's work, Captain James coolly resumed charge and directed the further maneuvers of his men. The beach-apparatus had now arrived, and realizing that further attempts to use the boat would be futile, Captain James promptly fired a line which fell squarely across the vessel, but high up in the rigging, where the poor, be-

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numbered sailors were unable to reach it. Another quickly followed, but with the same result. The third line, fortunately, fell across the mizzen topping-lift, and one of the sailors, summoning all his strength, shook the lift, to which he was clinging, until the line slid down within his reach. The crew then hauled aboard the whipline and made it fast just above the dead-eyes in the mizzen rigging. The hawser was sent out, and was fastened a little higher, but still too low to make the passage to the shore in the breeches-buoy safe, as the occupant would be hauled the entire distance through the sea and almost certainly drowned; and the poor sailors were too exhausted to carry the lines high enough in the rigging. But

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Captain James was equal to the emergency. He again ordered the men to man the boat, and using the hawser as a sort of trolley or ferry line, and with another line to the shore astern, they pulled out through the breakers and soon reached the wreck. Now another difficulty presented itself. The men on board were too benumbed and exhausted to get over the side of the vessel and into the boat unaided, and some of the life-savers had to climb into the shrouds and help them down, one at a time. The danger involved is difficult for landsmen to comprehend. The wreck was pounding heavily, the seas were sweeping over her constantly, and the lifeboat was bouncing about like a cork in imminent danger

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of being crushed against the ship's side. But at last the men were all got aboard, the signal was given, and with a wild shout the crowd on shore ran up the beach with the rope, and pulled the rescued and rescuers safely ashore. The shipwrecked sailors were badly frostbitten, the captain's hands being so seriously frozen that he had to stay at the station nine or ten days under medical treatment.

This account of the wreck of the *Ulrica* affords a fair idea of frequent experiences in rescue work, but by no means an adequate one of the dangers, toil, and exposure which life-savers incur in such tempests as that of November 25-26, 1888, or in the terrible storm which occurred just ten years later, about to be mentioned.

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The crowning achievement of Captain James' entire career as a life-saver was the heroic work performed in the great storm of November, 1898, which is said to have been the worst that ever visited the New England coast, not even excepting the one which tore the Minot's Ledge lighthouse from its foundations, in 1851. It was certainly the most disastrous to shipping of which there is any record. It will perhaps be longest remembered as the one in which the steamer *Portland* went down off Highland Light, Cape Cod, with all her passengers and crew, numbering, according to best accounts, one hundred and twenty-nine. It was in this storm that the loss of the sixteen lives charged to the account of the

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Point Allerton life-saving station, occurred. A rigid investigation, however, proved conclusively that not a single one of those lost was at any time within the reach of human assistance. The following description of the storm, from the annual report of the Life-Saving Service, will help the reader to appreciate how apparently insurmountable were the obstacles encountered and what heroism must have marked the endeavors of the life-savers in effecting rescues regarded by the witnesses as impossible.

“ When the *Portland* steamed away from her pier in Boston harbor, about 7 o'clock p. m., scores of sailing vessels between Gay Head and Cape Ann were hunting for harbors of refuge. Forty took shelter in Vineyard Haven (Holmes Holl), of which number



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more than half suffered injury. Many found anchorage in Provincetown and Gloucester, while others were crowding every stitch they could bear to reach port. Those already there passed additional stout lines to the dock or dropped another trustworthy anchor.

“That stormy weather was threatening during the afternoon and early evening of November 26 is not within dispute, for besides the warnings of the Weather Bureau, the conditions were unmistakably proven by the flight of many vessels into port. But that the storm which followed far exceeded the apprehensions, both of the most timid and the most intelligent, is equally clear. Snow began falling early, and the wind increased until by 10 o'clock it was blowing a gale from the northeast with sleet and snow so thick that one could not see one hundred yards at best. At midnight it was a hurricane. The captain of a large steel trans-atlantic

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steamship, at the time in Boston harbor, states that he could scarcely see across the ship. The expanding force of the cyclone swept in with the rising tide, causing the waters to flood the beaches far beyond well-defined storm limits, and to tear through the sand ridges and submerge the marshes for miles around. In the track of this overpowering deluge were havoc and destruction. It washed away large portions of the bank or sea-wall in the rear of the beaches, and scooped out the latter in many places to a depth of five feet. Bulkheads constructed to protect roadways near the shore were battered down by the resistless shocks of the waves, and roads were buried and obliterated beneath piles and windrows of sand and stones. Houses were blown from their foundations, and in many instances hopelessly shattered, in some wholly destroyed. At Scituate Point the whole village, numbering upward of one hundred dwellings, was almost ruined,

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while many of the inhabitants narrowly escaped with their lives. In one instance a woman was drowned while her husband was trying to assist her to escape from their dwelling. The boathouse of the Massachusetts Humane Society near Scituate Light was swept to the south side of the harbor, the boat going one way and the boat carriage another. The wind at this time is said to have been 'something terrific — its intensity could not be described, nor could words convey an approximate idea of its terrifying effect.'

"In the town of Hull, which includes Nantasket Beach, damage was inflicted estimated at upward of two hundred thousand dollars. There was hardly a building, says one witness, that escaped some injury. The railroad sea-wall, constructed of heavy granite stones, was ruined for a mile, and the beaches were lowered two or three feet in some places, and narrowed ten or fifteen feet. On Mon-

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day, November 28, when the storm had spent its fury, the shores and surroundings were a stretch of wreck and ruin.

"Against such an indescribable pandemonium of wind and sea as the foregoing fragmentary review suggests, few craft, steam or sail, could successfully contend on a lee shore, and the deplorable consequence was that the coast, rocks, and islands from Gay Head to Cape Ann were strewn with wrecked or disabled vessels, while an uncertain but considerable number foundered not far away at sea."

Judging from the ruin created on shore, and the number of vessels which met with disaster in the immediate vicinity of Point Allerton, it seems certain that here the storm reached the height of its power. The terrors and suffering which the

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surfmen endured as they maintained their patrols throughout that dreadful night are beyond description. The force of the wind was so great as to literally take away their breath, so that they were frequently compelled to turn their backs and crouch close to the earth for relief, while the great seas rolling far up the rock-strewn beaches constantly threatened to overwhelm them and repeatedly forced them to flee with all speed to higher ground.

In the morning, after taking to the station two survivors — all that were left of thirteen men composing the crews of two vessels that had been dashed to pieces on Toddy Rocks during the night — and a family driven from their home by the encroachment

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of the sea, the life-saving crew, with much difficulty, took off seven men in the breeches-buoy from a three-masted schooner. The next task was the rescue of five men from a barge by fighting their way far out into the surf, at great personal risk, to snatch the men from the grasp of the treacherous undertow as they came shoreward on the floating deckhouse. Under the adverse conditions prevailing these operations consumed the entire day. The second day, after another night's patrol, more terrible than the first, if possible, they started as soon as there was sufficient light to the wreck of a schooner which could be faintly discerned on Lighthouse Island, lying about a mile and a half to the northeast of Hull in the

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open bay. The sea was still so high that it was necessary to transfer the lifeboat to Pemberton Landing into more quiet water and enlist the services of a tug to tow it to the vicinity of the wreck, and, after the rescue was successfully effected, to tow it back. Three men were found alive on this wreck, while one had died from exposure and two had been washed overboard during the night. On their return from this expedition, the life-savers immediately started with their boat to the rescue of three men who had been cast up on Black Rock, some six miles to the southward, with wreckage from a schooner foundered in that vicinity.

It is unnecessary to attempt to describe in detail the experiences of the

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life-saving men at these disasters. They were much like those already recounted with respect to other occasions except that the hardships, dangers, and difficulties involved were vastly greater on account of the greater intensity and destructiveness of the storm. While the number of lives saved in this tempest did not equal that of the great storm of 1888, the period of incessant exertion was nearly twice as long as on the former occasion, and the work of the life-savers during this period repeatedly called forth the highest heroism and taxed their skill and endurance to the utmost. Perhaps the result of their brave work throughout the storm may not be better expressed than in the words of Keeper James



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himself, who says in his testimony, "We succeeded in getting every man that was alive at the time we started for him, and we started at the earliest moment in every case."

The extraordinary labors performed and the hardships endured under the leadership of Captain James on this occasion were the more remarkable when it is remembered that he had now exceeded the scriptural allotment of three-score years and ten. But years seemed to have little effect upon his vitality. In the annual physical examinations to which all keepers of life-saving stations over the age of fifty-five are subjected, and which must prove them to be not only physically sound but in every respect fully capable of performing all the

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duties of their position, Captain James was on each occasion found by the exacting tests of the Government surgeons to be fully qualified, both mentally and physically. The certificate of his last examination, held in July, 1901, when he was nearing the seventy-fifth milestone on the journey of life, shows that he was still in every way fit for the responsible position of keeper. He still retained the quick, elastic step, the strength and skill to handle the boat in tempestuous weather, and the intuitive mental perception of the man in his prime. His wonderful physical endowment and his exceptional mental equipment for coping with sudden and desperate emergencies made him still invaluable to the Service. Up

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to the very day of his death, March 19, 1902, there was no apparent indication of failure in body or mind such as might be expected in a man of his age.

On March 17, 1902, the entire crew, save one, of the Monomoy Point life-saving station, lost their lives in a brave attempt to rescue the crew of the barge *Wadena*, stranded on the shoals off the Point. The tragedy created a profound sensation along the entire Atlantic seaboard. The feeling was especially tense in Boston and its immediate neighborhood, where the sum of nearly fifty thousand dollars was promptly raised by voluntary subscription for the relief of the families of the victims of the disaster. Captain James was

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deeply affected by the catastrophe, and seemed to realize as never before the perilous nature of his calling.

✓ Two days later, with a northeast gale blowing, he called out his crew to boat drill in the self-bailing lifeboat at the unusually early hour of seven o'clock in the morning, as if to reassure himself of its capabilities in a high surf and rough sea, as well as of the proficiency of his crew. They launched the boat, and Captain James, taking the steering oar, maneuvered in the surf and boisterous sea for more than an hour — an exercise which more severely taxed his own strength and endurance than those of any of his crew. The drill was very satisfactory, and the Captain expressed his great gratification both

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with the behavior of the boat in freeing itself of the torrents of water which boarded it, and with the skill of the men. At length he gave the orders for landing, and when the boat grounded upon the beach opposite the station he sprang out upon the wet sand and, glancing at the sea a moment, remarked to his men, "The tide is ebbing." These were his last words, but little did he know how true they were for him, for as he uttered them, he fell dead upon the beach. As the exact moment of the turn of the tide is all but imperceptible, so neither Joshua James nor those about him perceived that the tide of his life had turned until his noble spirit had taken its flight. And so the last anxiety of this gentle, loving man, whose whole

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life had been devoted to service and sacrifice for others, was that he and those under his charge might be thoroughly prepared to render the most efficient aid to their fellow-beings in distress whenever occasion should arise.

Thus ended the career of probably the best-known life-saver in the world. Not the greatest, as he has sometimes been called, if the words are held to imply that he wrought more heroic achievements or performed more marvelous feats in wreck-craft than any other; for the annals of the Life-Saving Service are replete with instances of rescues made under fully as desperate and apparently hopeless circumstances, and involving as high a degree of skill and

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bravery as any in which he participated. In these respects he only truly typified the leaders among American life-savers, but his sixty years of rescue work gave him a longer term of service and a more diversified experience in battling with the sea than any of his contemporaries. In this regard he might be called the greatest among them.

However, Captain James cared little what he was styled. He found ample compensation in the consciousness of duty well performed and the gratitude of those whom his valor saved from death. These were more to him than popular applause or public honors. Here and there may be found men in all walks of life who neither wonder nor care how much or

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how little the world thinks of them. They pursue life's pathway, doing their appointed tasks without ostentation, loving their work for the work's sake, content to live and do in the present rather than look for the uncertain rewards of the future. To them notoriety, distinction, or even fame, acts neither as a spur nor a check to endeavor, yet they are really among the foremost of those who do the world's work. Joshua James was one of these.









